



US009147956B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Nakamura

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,147,956 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Sep. 29, 2015**

(54) **HELICAL SPRING, CONNECTOR,
ELECTRODE AND ELECTROMETER**

USPC 324/66, 71.1–72.5, 76.11–76.83,
324/84–91, 133; 439/824; 267/166–180;
29/428; 607/115; 156/345.24

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See application file for complete search history.

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(73) Assignee: **TANITA CORPORATION**, Tokyo (JP)

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 117 days.

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(21) Appl. No.: **13/784,801**

(22) Filed: **Mar. 4, 2013**

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(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2014/0103903 A1 Apr. 17, 2014

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(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**

G01R 19/00 (2006.01)
H01R 13/24 (2006.01)
F16F 1/08 (2006.01)
A61B 5/0408 (2006.01)

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(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **H01R 13/2421** (2013.01); **A61B 5/04085**
(2013.01); **F16F 1/08** (2013.01); **G01R 19/00**
(2013.01); **A61B 2562/046** (2013.01)

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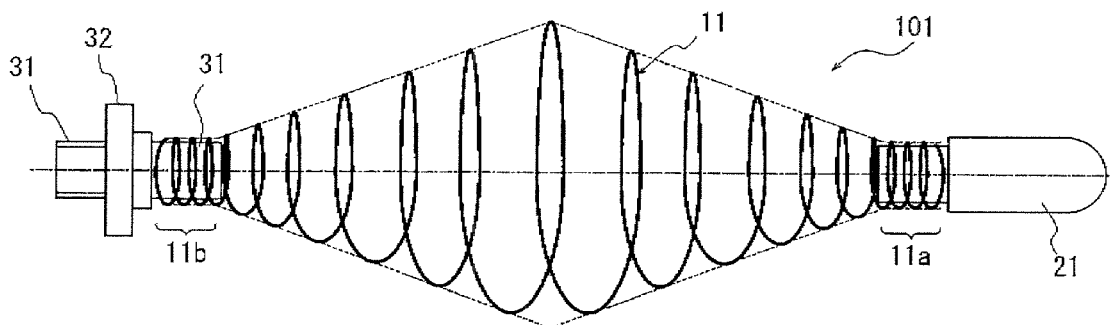
(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC H01R 13/2421; G01R 19/00; G01R
19/0092; G01R 1/203; G01R 31/2642; F16F
1/08; G06F 9/3802; G06F 2221/2137; G06F
19/34; A61M 16/06; A61M 16/0611; A61M
16/0616; A61M 16/0622; A61M 16/0633;
A61N 1/36114; A61N 1/36117; G03G
9/08797; A61B 5/002; A61B 5/04085; A61B
2562/046; A61B 17/0682; B60K 15/03504;
E21B 10/25; A23F 3/18

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A helical spring includes cylindrical portions and a widened portion disposed between the cylindrical portions. The cylindrical portions are disposed at both ends of the helical spring in the axis direction and have a constant outside diameter. In the widened portion, from the both ends of the helical spring toward a center of the helical spring in the axis direction, a diameter of the helical spring increases as a pitch of the helical spring increases. The helical spring can be used as part of a connector, an electrode or an electrometer.

12 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets



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FIG. 1

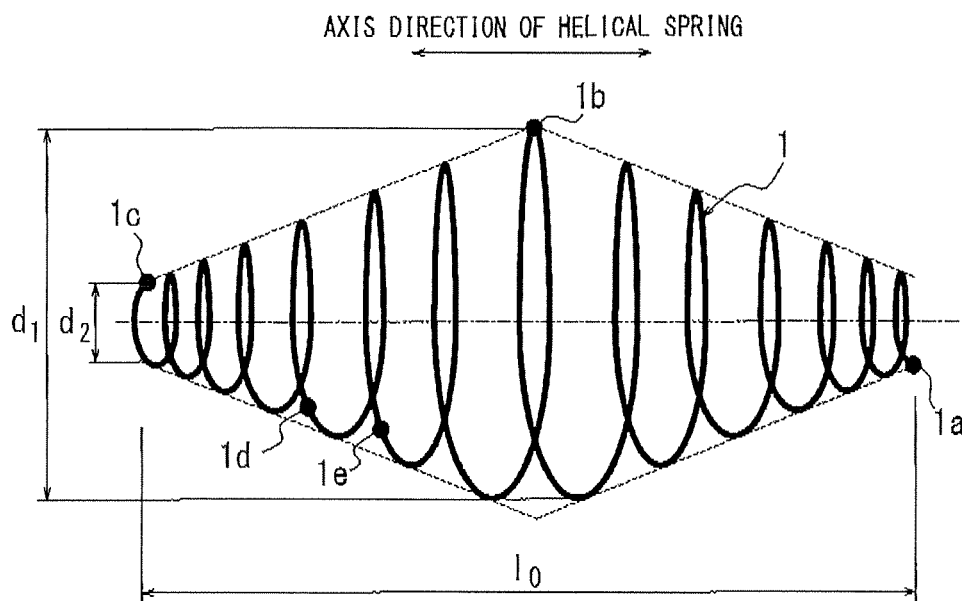


FIG. 2

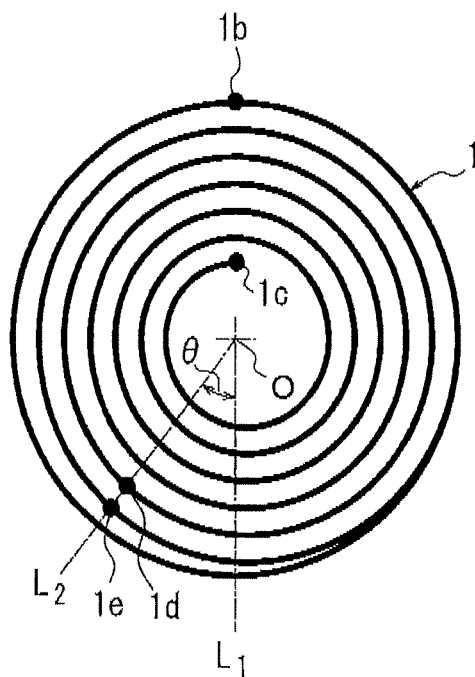


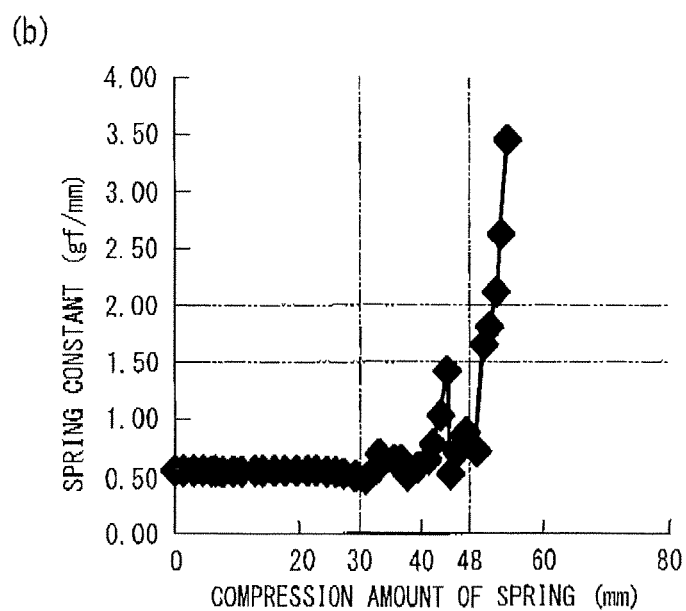
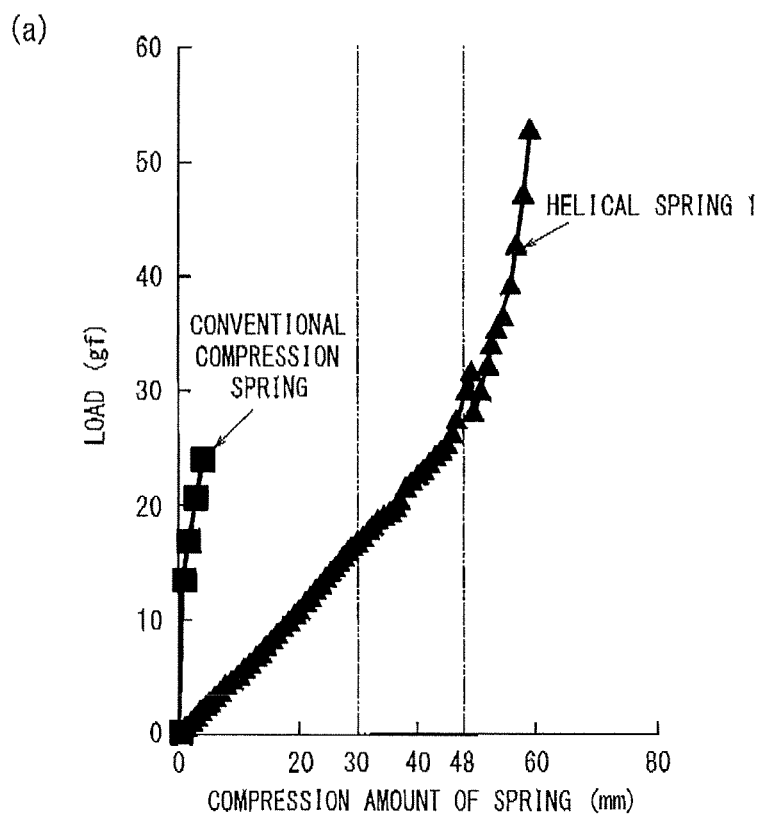
FIG. 3

FIG. 4

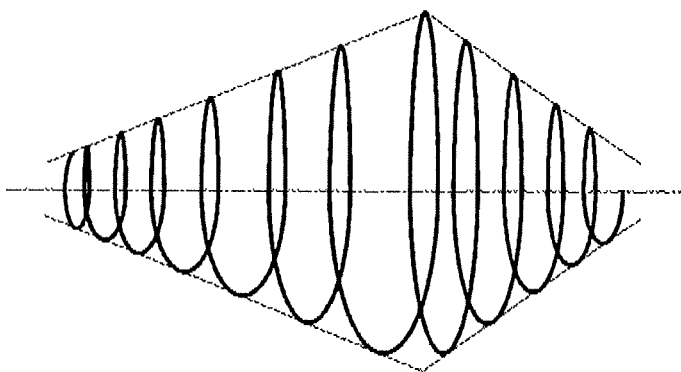


FIG. 5

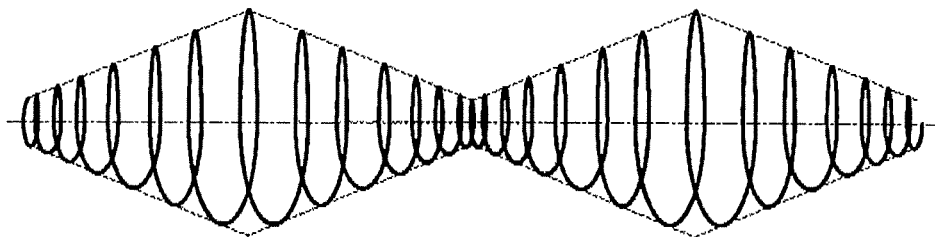


FIG. 6

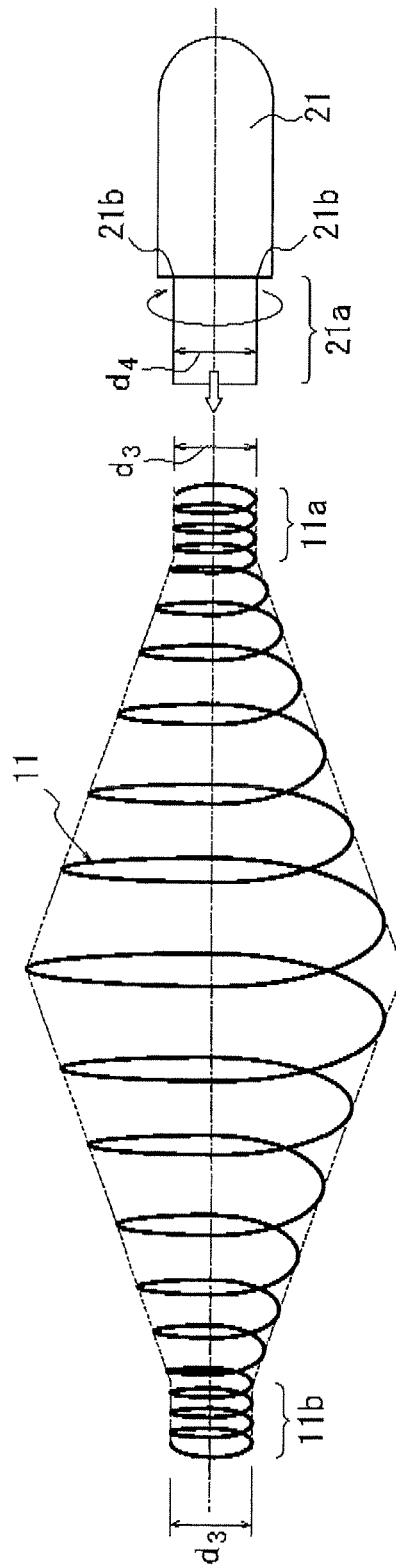
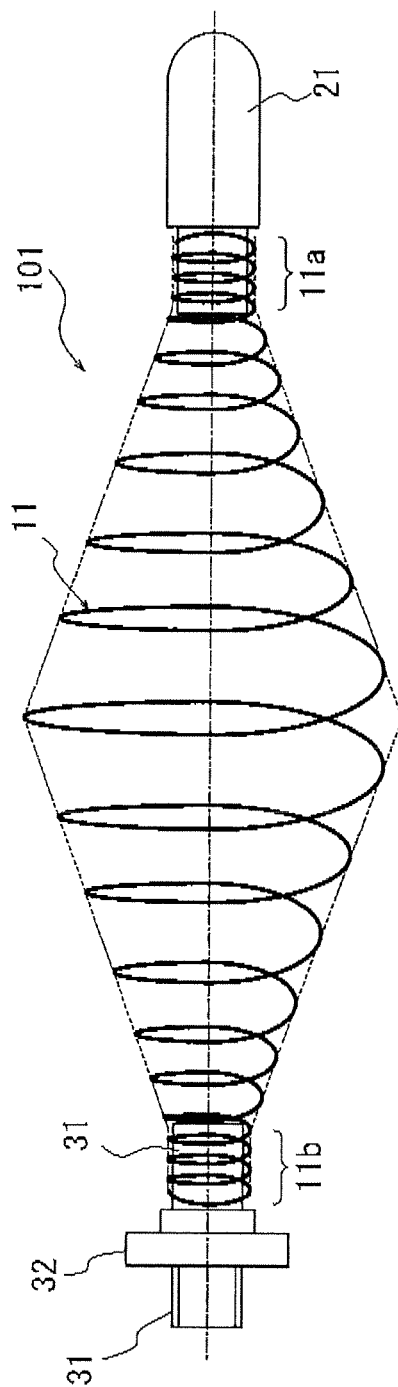


FIG. 7



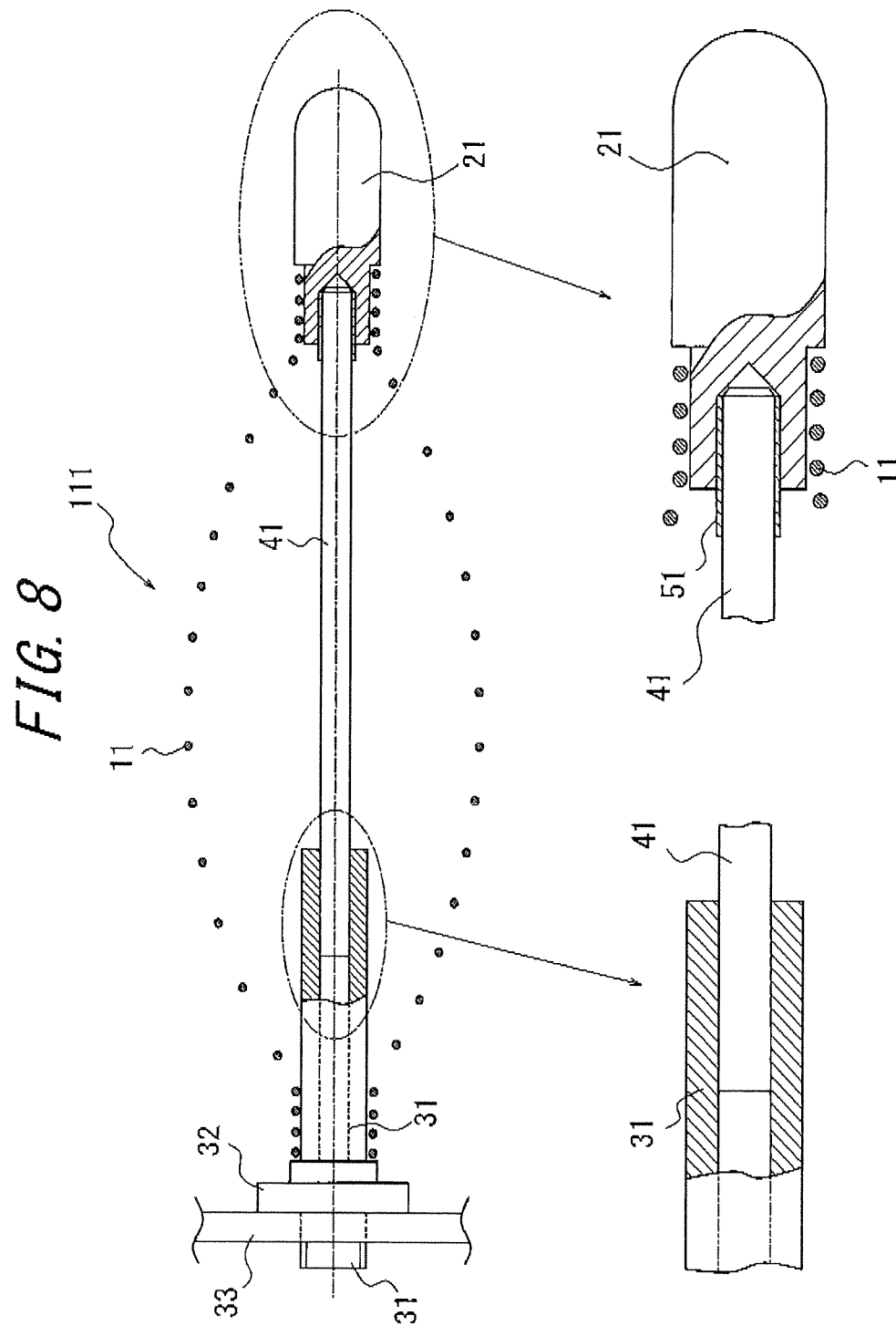


FIG. 9

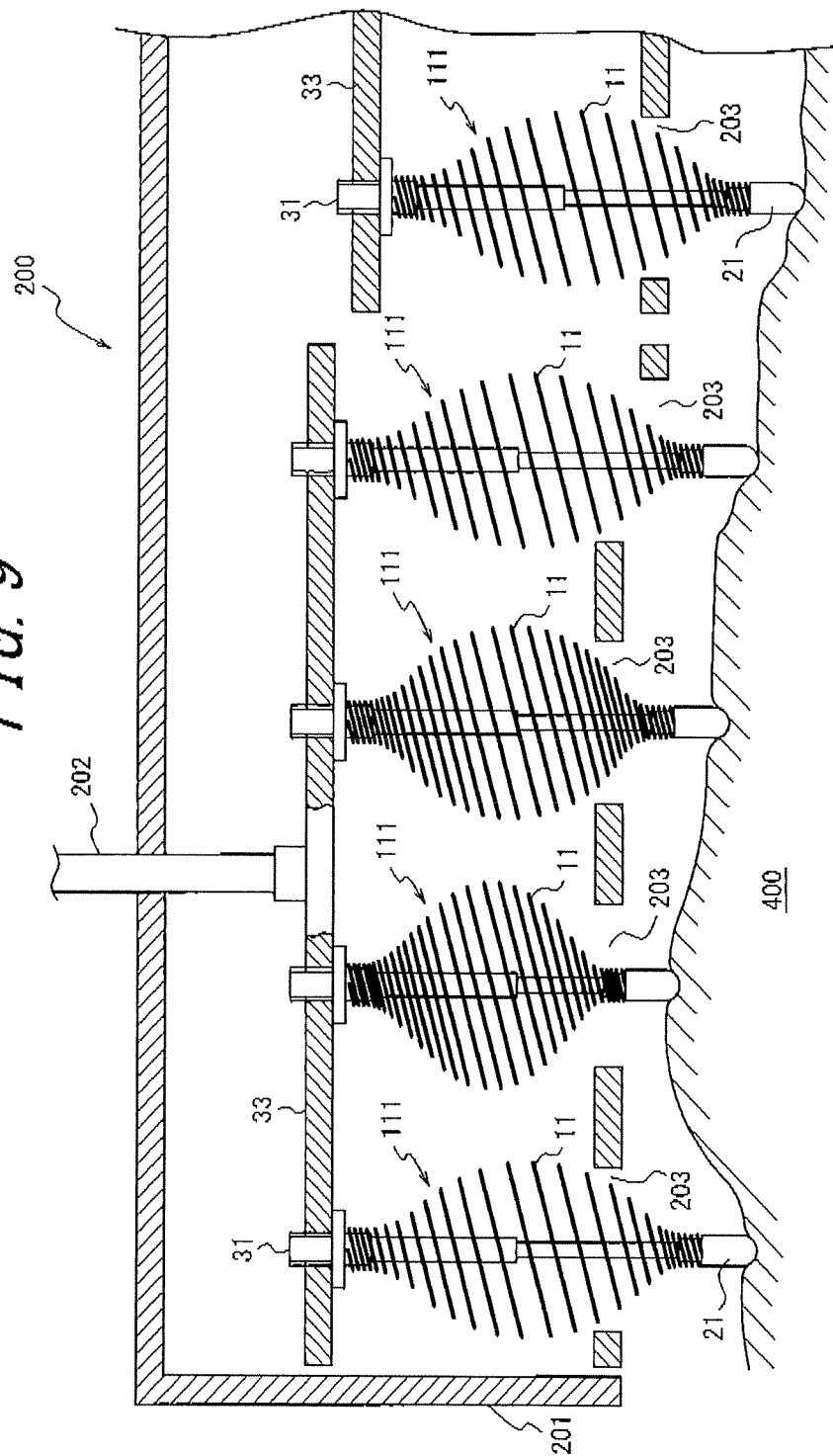


FIG. 10

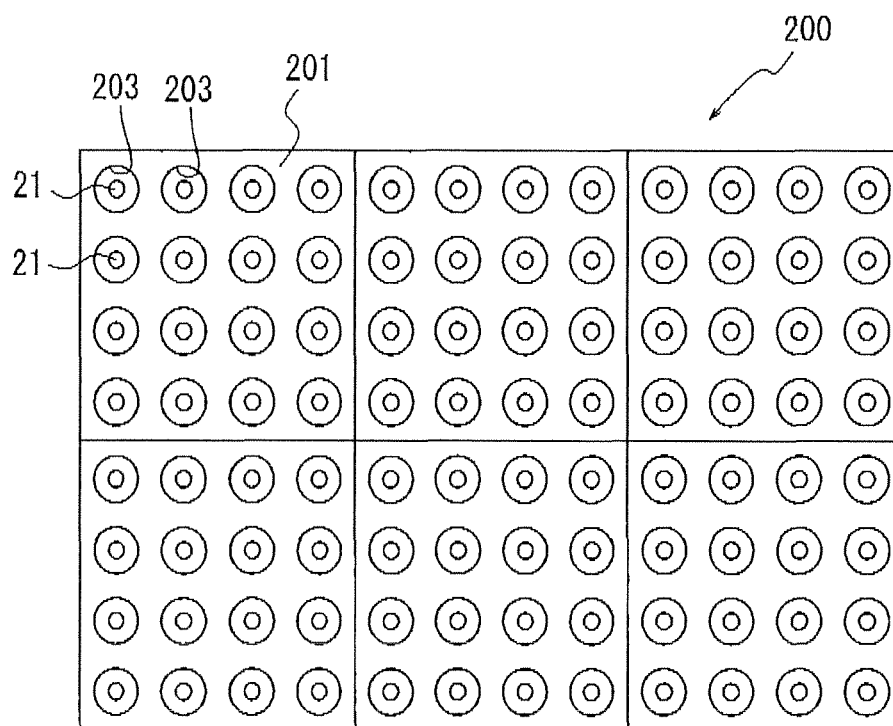
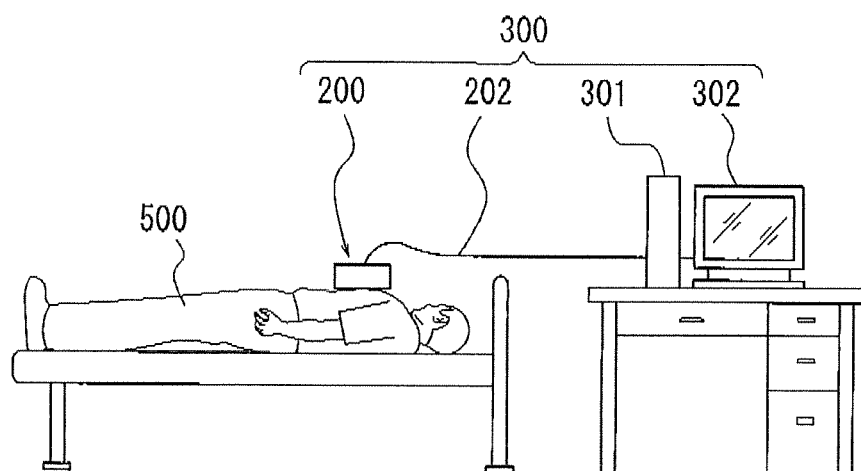


FIG. 11

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HELICAL SPRING, CONNECTOR, ELECTRODE AND ELECTROMETER

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a helical spring with a small spring constant, a connector having the helical spring and a terminal, an electrode having the connector and a substrate, and an electrometer having the electrode, an arithmetic device and a monitor.

BACKGROUND

In order to measure a potential on a body surface of a patient by using an electrocardiograph, a number of terminals stretching from the substrate of a measurement apparatus generally need to contact the body surface of the patient. The body surface of the patient is unlevel in different manners between patients. When the terminal and the substrate are connected to each other through a usual lead, since a distance therebetween may not be changed according to a shape of the body surface of the patient, it has been difficult to connect a number of terminals to the body surface of the patient. Also, there has been a risk that a connecting part between the terminal and the lead or between the lead and the substrate is disconnected while in use.

As such, Patent Document 1, for example, suggests a technique to connect the terminal and the substrate by using a compression spring. According to this technique, by compressing the compression spring when the terminal is pressed against the body surface of the patient, the distance between the terminal and the substrate is changed, thereby facilitating contact of a number of terminals to the body surface of the patient.

RELATED ART DOCUMENT

Patent Document

Patent Document 1: Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. 58-177633

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Problem to be Solved by the Invention

However, since it is difficult to reduce the spring constant of the compression spring described in Patent Document 1, a heavy load is applied on the patient when the terminal contacts the body surface of the patient, which has been stressful for the patient.

In order to solve such a problem, the present invention provides the helical spring with a small spring constant, the connector, the electrode and the electrometer.

The helical spring according to the present invention is characterized in having the spring constant at 2.0 gf/mm or smaller until being compressed to 50% or more in an axis direction.

This helical spring has the spring constant smaller than that of a conventional helical spring and enables to obtain a larger stroke in response to a small force.

Preferably, the helical spring according to the present invention is wound to have a varied outside diameter and at least a part where adjacent portions in the same phase do not overlap with each other in the axis direction.

In this case, since the adjacent portions in the same phase do not contact with each other in the axis direction, a plurality

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of rounds of the helical spring may be positioned on one plane perpendicular to the axis direction. Accordingly, a closed height of the helical spring may be reduced.

Also preferably, the helical spring according to the present invention has a larger pitch near a center in the axis direction than the pitch near both ends in the axis direction.

In this case, the helical spring may have a further smaller and approximately constant spring constant.

Here, the helical spring according to the present invention preferably includes cylindrical portions with an approximately constant outside diameter at both ends in the axis direction.

In this case, a large stick member (for example, a terminal) having an outside diameter of approximately the same size as an inside diameter of the cylindrical portion is inserted into the cylindrical portion while being rotated in a direction to open the helical spring, or a cylindrical member having an inside diameter of approximately the same size as an outside diameter of the cylindrical portion is fit on an outside of the cylindrical portion while being rotated in a direction closing the helical spring. Thereby, the member may be easily and strongly fixed to the cylindrical portion of the helical spring.

Next, the connector according to the present invention is characterized in including the helical spring according to the present invention having a conductive property, and a first terminal and a second terminal to respectively fit in the cylindrical portions at both ends of the helical spring.

This connector enables to stably transmit an electric signal while significantly changing a distance between the first terminal and the second terminal.

Preferably, the connector according to the present invention further includes a support connected to the first terminal and stretching in the axis direction of the helical spring.

In this case, buckling (bowing) of the helical spring of the connector may be prevented.

Here, the connector according to the present invention preferably includes the second terminal in a cylindrical shape having the support inserted therein.

In this case, since the support is inserted in the second terminal in the cylindrical shape, the helical spring in a compressed state may be prevented from colliding with the second terminal. Also, a heat capacity of the second terminal may be reduced to facilitate soldering the second terminal to a substrate and the like.

Here, the connector according to the present invention preferably includes the support insulated from the first terminal.

When the support and a second support contact with each other, electricity flows into two routes, possibly changing combined resistance and generating noise. However, insulating the support from the first terminal may prevent generation of such noise.

The electrode according to the present invention is characterized in including a number of connectors according to the present invention and a substrate having a second terminal of each of the connectors fixed thereto.

This electrode enables a number of first terminals to easily contact an uneven plane, as well as enabling to reduce a force received by the plane upon contact.

Here, the electrode according to the present invention preferably includes a plurality of substrates.

In this case, each of the substrates is separately displaced relative to a contact plane of the first terminal. Thereby, a deformation amount of the helical spring is not significantly different between the substrates and, without increasing the stroke of the helical spring more than necessary, the first

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terminal of the connector fixed to each of the substrates may fit on an uneven contact plane.

One electrometer according to the present invention is characterized in including an electrode according to the present invention, an arithmetic device for performing arithmetic processing of a signal received by the first terminal of the connector of the electrode and calculating a distribution of potentials on the contact plane of the first terminal, and a monitor for displaying the distribution of the potentials calculated by the arithmetic device.

This electrometer enables to reduce a force from the electrode received by the patient, as well as to accurately measure and confirm the potentials at a number of positions on a body surface of the patient.

Another electrometer according to the present invention is characterized in including the electrode, the arithmetic device and the monitor, wherein the electrode includes a helical spring having the spring constant at 2.0 gf/mm or smaller until being compressed to 50% or more in the axis direction. This electrometer may reduce the force from the electrode received by the patient.

The helical spring, the connector, the electrode and the electrometer according to the present invention enable to obtain a large stroke in response to a small force.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a front view of a helical spring according to a first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a left side view of the helical spring illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3(a) is a diagram illustrating a relationship between compression amounts in an axis direction of the helical spring according to the present invention and of a conventional compression spring and loads applied on the springs. FIG. 3(b) is a diagram illustrating a relationship between the compression amount in the axis direction and a spring constant of the helical spring according to the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a front view illustrating a helical spring according to a second embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 5 is a front view illustrating a helical spring according to a third embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 6 is a front view illustrating a helical spring according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 7 is a front view illustrating a connector according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 8 is a front cross-section view illustrating a connector according to a second embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 9 is a front cross-section view of an electrode according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 10 is a bottom view of the electrode illustrated in FIG. 9.

FIG. 11 is a configuration diagram illustrating an electrometer according to one embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

Embodiments of the present invention will be described as examples with reference to the accompanying drawings.

As illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, a helical spring 1 according to a first embodiment of the present invention has an outside diameter gradually increasing from one end 1a to a center 1b in an axis direction and gradually reducing from the center 1b to another end 1c in the axis direction.

Also, the helical spring 1 is wound in such a manner that adjacent portions in the same phase, which are parts 1d and 1e

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illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, for example, do not overlap with each other in the axis direction.

The following is a detailed description of a shape of the helical spring 1. As illustrated in FIG. 2, a straight line L_1 connects a center O in the axis direction and a lower side in FIG. 2, and a straight line L_2 connects the center O in the axis direction and a position 1d of the helical spring 1. A phase of the 1d is represented by an angle θ between the L_1 and the L_2 . Accordingly, a position 1e adjacent to the same phase as the position 1d is outside the part 1d by one round on an extended line of the L_2 .

In FIG. 2, the position 1d and the position 1e have no common area and do not overlap with each other in the axis direction.

The helical spring 1 in such a shape may be produced by appropriately adjusting an increase amount of the outside diameter in the axis direction, a pitch angle of the spring, a wire diameter and the like.

Next, FIG. 3(a) illustrates a relationship between compression amounts (mm) in the axis direction of the helical spring 1 and of a conventional compression spring and loads (gf) applied on the springs. FIG. 3(b) illustrates a relationship between the compression amount (mm) in the axis direction and a spring constant (gf/mm) of the helical spring 1.

The helical spring 1 is made of phosphor bronze and is 60 mm in a natural length l_0 , 8 mm in a maximum outside diameter d_1 , 3 mm in a minimum diameter d_2 , and 0.3 mm in the wire diameter (diameter) in FIG. 1.

On the other hand, the conventional compression diameter used for measurement is made of stainless wire SUS304-WPB and is 14 mm in a natural length, 1.06 mm in an outside diameter and 0.1 mm in the wire diameter (diameter).

As can be seen from FIG. 3(a), the helical spring 1 has a significantly smaller spring constant (a slope of a curve) and a larger compression amount (stroke), in comparison to those of the conventional compression spring. Also, as can be seen from FIG. 3(b), the helical spring 1 has the spring constant at 2.0 gf/mm or smaller until the compression amount in the axis direction becomes 50% (30 mm in this example) or more (in an area on the left-hand side of a virtual line in the figure).

As can be understood from FIG. 3(b), the spring constant may be 1.5 gf/mm or smaller. Such a configuration enables to compress the helical spring in response to a smaller force.

When the helical spring is used as an electrode of an electrocardiograph, the spring constant is more preferably at 2.0 gf/mm or smaller until the helical spring is compressed to 80% or more in the axis direction, in order to reduce stress put on a patient.

The following is a description of a reason that the helical spring 1 according to the present embodiment may have a smaller spring constant and a larger stroke in comparison to those of the conventional compression spring. As described above, the helical spring 1 is wound in such a manner that the adjacent portions in the same phase do not overlap with each other in the axis direction. Therefore, when the helical spring 1 is compressed, the adjacent portions in the same phase may be positioned on the same plane perpendicular to the axis direction. Accordingly, a compression allowance of the helical spring 1 is increased, enabling to reduce the spring constant and increase the stroke.

As illustrated in FIG. 1, also, the helical spring 1 is wound to have a larger pitch near the center in the axis direction than that near both ends in the axis direction. Since the pitch of the helical spring 1 is adjusted in this manner, the spring constant may be even smaller and approximately constant in a wide range of the stroke as illustrated in FIG. 3(b).

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Instead of the spring in a barrel shape as illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, also in using a conical spring illustrated in FIG. 4 or a gourd-shaped spring illustrated in FIG. 5 wound in such a manner that the adjacent portions in the same phase do not overlap with each other in the axis direction, the spring constant may be reduced and the stroke may be increased.

The helical spring described above is would to have a varied outside diameter and at least a part where the adjacent portions in the same phase do not overlap with each other in the axis direction. Thereby, the spring constant is reduced to be smaller than that of the conventional compression spring. Note that there are other methods to reduce the spring constant of the helical spring. For example, the spring constant may be reduced by using some material or by adjusting the outside diameter and/or the pitch and the like of the helical spring.

FIG. 6 illustrates a helical spring 11 according to another embodiment of the present invention. The helical spring 11 has the same configuration as the helical spring 1, except having cylindrical portions 11a, 11b with approximately constant outside diameter at both ends in the axis direction. The spring is wound at a smaller pitch in the cylindrical portions 11a, 11b than in other portions.

Although not illustrated in the figure, the cylindrical portion described above may be provided at only one end of the helical spring 11 in the axis direction. Also, when the cylindrical portions described above are provided at the both ends of the springs in FIG. 4 and FIG. 5, a function effect described below may be obtained.

A stick member such as a terminal 21 having an outside diameter approximately the same as an inside diameter of the cylindrical portions 11a and 11b may be fit in the cylindrical portions 11a and 11b. When a force in the axis direction is applied on the helical spring having the stick member fit therein, the cylindrical portions are hardly deformed in the axis direction. Accordingly, the spring according to the present invention having a cylindrical portion at least one end thereof in the axis direction is defined to have the spring constant at 2.0 gf/mm or smaller until the spring except the cylindrical portion is compressed to 50% or more.

The following is a description of a method to fit the terminal 21 into the cylindrical portion 11a. Although a description is omitted, the terminal 21 may be fit in the cylindrical portion 11b in a similar manner.

Since an outside diameter d_4 of a basement 21a is of approximately the same size as an inside diameter d_3 of the cylindrical portion 11a, the terminal 21 is resistant to be inserted into the cylindrical portion 11a when the terminal 21 is simply pushed into the cylindrical portion 11a. As illustrated in FIG. 6, however, when the terminal 21 is pushed into the cylindrical portion 11a while being rotated about its axis in a direction expanding the diameter of the cylindrical portion 11a, the inside diameter of the cylindrical portion 11a is expanded and the terminal 21 may be inserted therein by a small force.

An end portion of the terminal 21 from the basement 21a is formed to have an outside diameter larger than the basement 21a. Accordingly, the terminal 21 may be inserted into the cylindrical portion 11a as long as a length of the basement 21a.

When the terminal 21 is fit in the cylindrical portion 11a as illustrated in FIG. 7, the cylindrical portion 11a having an expanded diameter tries to restore an original outside diameter due to its elastic property. Thereby, the terminal 21 receives a force constricting in a radially inward direction from the cylindrical portion 11a. When the terminal 21 is pulled in a direction to be pulled out of the cylindrical portion

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11a, an elastic force of the helical spring 11 acts in an opposite direction. Due to these forces, the terminal 21 is resistant to be pulled out of the cylindrical portion 11a when being simply pulled in the direction to be pulled out of the cylindrical portion 11a.

In order to remove the terminal 21 from the cylindrical portion 11a, the terminal 21 is pulled out of the cylindrical portion 11a while being rotated about its axis in a direction to shrink the diameter of the cylindrical portion 11a (in a direction opposite to that to insert the terminal 21). Thereby, the terminal 21 may be removed from the cylindrical portion 11a by a small force.

Fitting the terminal 21 inside the cylindrical portion 11a in this manner enables to insert, remove and replace the terminal 21 easier in comparison to the terminal 21 fixed by soldering, an adhesive and the like.

Also, although the terminal 21 according to the above embodiment is formed to have a smooth peripheral surface, the peripheral surface may have screw cutting in order to further facilitate insertion, removal and replacement of the terminal 21.

Although not illustrated in the figure, a cylindrical member having an inside diameter of approximately the same as the outside diameter of the cylindrical portion 11a may be fit on the outside of the cylindrical portion 11a. In this case, the cylindrical portion 11a is inserted while the cylindrical member is rotated in the direction closing the helical spring 11, thereby the outside diameter of the cylindrical portion 11a is reduced and thus the cylindrical member may be fit outside the cylindrical portion 11a by a small force.

FIG. 7 illustrates a connector 101 according to the first embodiment of the present invention. The connector 101 includes the helical spring 11 illustrated in FIG. 6 having a conductive property, and the first terminal 21 and the second terminal 31 respectively fit in the cylindrical portions 11a, 11b at both ends of the helical spring 11 in the above manner. The second terminal 31 has a fixing member 32 mounted on an outer periphery near a base thereof for fixing the second terminal 31 to the substrate.

Although not illustrated in the figure, the connector may also be configured by fitting the first terminal 21 in the cylindrical portion at one end of the helical spring according to the present invention and the second terminal to the other end of the helical spring by soldering or another method. Also, the connector may be configured by fixing the first terminal and the second terminal to each of the both ends of the helical spring according to the present invention by soldering or another method.

Here, in order to provide the helical spring 11 with the conductive property, the helical spring 11 is generally made of metal, preferably phosphor bronze (copper alloy) in terms of an electric property. Or, the helical spring 11 may be made of conductive resin, carbon or the like.

Similarly, the first terminal 21 and the second terminal 31 may be made of metal, conductive resin, carbon or the like. In order to provide an antibacterial effect and an antifouling effect to the terminal, one or both of the terminals preferably include photocatalyst such as titanium oxide or the like. Note that the first terminal 21 and the second terminal 31 may be subject to plate processing.

Incidentally, when the connector 101 is used as the electrode of the electrocardiograph, the first terminal 21 may have an end in a dome shape as illustrated in FIG. 7, in a triangular pyramid shape, in a cone shape, in a crown shape, in a flat shape, in a cup shape, or in a diamond (polygonal) shape, to contact at points. Or, the first terminal 21 may have a planarized end.

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The connector **101** has the helical spring **11** functioning as a conductive wire for transmitting an electric signal between the first terminal **21** and the second terminal **31**. By expanding or compressing the helical spring **11** having a large stroke, the distance between the first terminal and the second terminal may be significantly changed.

Regardless of whether the helical spring **11** is expanded or compressed, the first terminal **21** and the second terminal **31** are strongly fitted in the cylindrical portions **11a** and **11b** of the helical spring **11**, respectively. Therefore, the connector **101** may stably transmit the electric signal.

FIG. **8** illustrates a connector **111** according to a second embodiment of the present invention. The connector **111** has the same configuration as the connector **101** illustrated in FIG. **7**, except having a support **41** stretching in the axis direction of the helical spring **11**.

Having a small spring constant, the helical spring **11** easily bends in directions perpendicular to the axis direction and is likely to buckle (bow). When the support **41** for connecting the first terminal **21** and the second terminal **31** is provided, such buckling may be prevented.

Here, in order to prevent the support **41** from obstructing expansion and compression of the helical spring **11** in the axis direction, the support **41** and the first terminal **21** or the second terminal **31** may be slidable. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **8**, the support **41** is inserted into the second terminal **31** in the cylindrical shape so as to be slidable in relation to the second terminal **31**.

When the second terminal **31** is in the cylindrical shape and thin as described above, the heat capacity of the second terminal **31** is reduced and temperature thereof easily increases when heated. Thereby, the second terminal **31** may be easily soldered to the substrate **33**.

When the support **41** is provided to the connector **111** as illustrated in FIG. **8**, the first terminal **21** and the second terminal **31** are connected together via the helical spring **11** and the support **41**. Since the helical spring **11** has the conductive property, when the support **41** also has the conductive property, electricity flows in two routes upon contact of the support **41** and the second terminal **31**, changing combined resistance and causing noise. As such, when an insulator **51** is provided between the support **41** and the first terminal **21** as illustrated in FIG. **8** such that the support **41** is insulated from the first terminal **21**, generation of the noise may be prevented. Note that the support **41** itself may be an insulator to prevent generation of the noise.

FIGS. **9** and **10** illustrate an electrode **200** according to one embodiment of the present invention. The electrode **200** is covered with a cover **201** in a box shape. Inside the cover **201**, as illustrated in FIG. **9**, a plurality of connectors **111** and substrates **33** having the second terminal **31** of each of the connectors **111** soldered thereto are provided in such a manner that the connectors **111** do not contact with each other. An opening **203** is provided on a bottom face of the cover **201** for allowing the first terminal **21** of each of the connectors **111** to protrude therefrom.

Also, the substrate **33** and the bottom face of the cover **201** are separated into a plurality of segments, for example, six segments (3 rows in a longitudinal direction and 2 rows in a width direction) as illustrated in FIGS. **9** and **10**. With the substrate **33** and the cover **201** configured in such a manner that each of the segments are separately displaced as described above, when there is significant unevenness on a contact plane **400** of the electrode **200**, each segments is displaced along most of the unevenness. Therefore, the helical spring **11** of each connector **111** in each segment needs only to follow fine unevenness. Accordingly, deformation

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amounts of the helical spring **11** are not significantly different from one another between the segments and, without increasing the stroke of the helical spring **11** more than necessary, the first terminal **21** of each of the connectors **111** may fit on the uneven surface of the contact plane **400**.

According to the present embodiment, also, in each segment on the bottom face of the cover **201**, the first terminal **21** of the **16** connectors **111** (4 rows both in the longitudinal direction and in the width direction) protrudes from the opening **203**. Accordingly, the electrode **200** may receive an input signal from 96 points (6×16). Note that the number of segments and the number of connectors in each segment are not limited to the figures provided above.

The electric signal input to the first terminal **21** of each connector **111** is transmitted, through the helical spring **11**, to the substrate **33**, to which the second terminal **31** is soldered. A number of input signals collected to the substrate **33** is transmitted to various devices by, for example, a cable **202** penetrating through an upper face of the cover **201** illustrated in FIG. **9**.

As illustrated in FIG. **10**, the first terminal **21** of each connector **111** protruding from the electrode **200** may be expanded and compressed in the axis direction of the helical spring **11**. Accordingly, by pressing the electrode **200** against the contact plane **400** to measure the potential and the like, even when the contact plane **400** is uneven or moves, each of the first terminals **21** of a number of connectors **111** may keep contacting the contact plane **400**.

As illustrated in FIGS. **3(a)** and **(b)**, also, since the helical spring has a very small spring constant, when the helical spring **11** is compressed following the shape of the contact plane **400**, the first terminal **21** of each of the connectors **111** has very little influence on the contact plane **400**. For example, when the electrode **200** is used as the electrode for the electrocardiograph, the electrode **200** is placed on the chest of the patient as illustrated in FIG. **11**. Here, when the electrode **200** weighs 1 kg, the first terminal **21** of each of the connectors **111** receives a force of approximately 10 gf (1000 gf/96) from the body surface of the patient. Since the helical spring **11** has a very small spring constant, the helical spring **11** is significantly deformed by such a small force. Accordingly, each of the first terminals **21** of the connectors **111** may contact the uneven body surface of the patient.

Although the patient receives a force of 1 kgf in total from the first terminals **21** protruding from the electrode **200**, such a force generally puts only small stress on the patient.

Accordingly, when the electrode according to the present embodiment is used for the electrocardiograph, the potentials at a number of positions on the body surface of the patient may be measured without heavily stressing the patient.

Note that the electrode described in the above embodiment is a mere example. The electrode having the helical spring with the spring constant at 2.0 gf/mm or smaller until being compressed to 50% or more in the axis direction may substantialize the electrode according to the present invention that enables to obtain a large stroke in response to a small force.

FIG. **11** illustrates an electrometer **300** according to one embodiment of the present invention. According to the present embodiment, the electrometer **300** used as the electrocardiograph includes the electrode **200** illustrated in FIGS. **9** and **10**, an arithmetic device **301** for performing arithmetic processing to the signal received by the first terminal **21** of the connector **111** of the electrode **200** and transmitted through the cable **202** and calculating the distribution of the potentials

on the contact plane of the first terminal **21**, and a monitor **302** for displaying the distribution of the potentials calculated by the arithmetic device **301**.

By using the electrometer **300**, the distribution of the potentials on a surface of the chest of a patient **500** in the supine position may be measured. In measuring, the electrode **200** is placed on the chest. Here, the electrode **200** is not pressed against the chest of the patient **500** by applying a force on an upper face of the electrode **200** but the weight of the electrode **200** alone is applied on the chest of the patient **500**, thereby the stress applied on the patient may be reduced.

Although the chest of the patient generally has unevenness due to the breasts or muscles, the helical spring **11** of each connector **111** of the electrode **200** is compressed along the uneven surface of the chest of the patient due to the weight of the electrode **200** such that each of the first terminals **21** of the connectors **111** contacts the chest of the patient.

In the above manner, the electrode **200** may receive the electric signals at a number of positions on the body surface of the patient **500**.

The electric signal received by the first terminal **21** of the electrode **200** is transmitted to the arithmetic device **301** via the cable **202**. The arithmetic device **301**, from the received electric signal, creates a map of the potentials on the chest of the patient **500**. The map of the potentials is output to the monitor **302** to be used for an examination by a doctor.

Note that the electrometer according to the above embodiment is a mere example. The electrometer having the electrode that has the helical spring with the spring constant at 2.0 gf/mm or smaller until being compressed to 50% or more in the axis direction may substantialize the electrometer according to the present invention that reduces the force from the electrode received by the patient. Also, the electrometer according to the present invention may have the arithmetic device, the monitor and the electrode that are integrally configured.

EXPLANATION OF REFERENCE NUMERALS

1 Helical spring
1a End
1b Center in axis direction
1c, 1d Portion
2 Width direction
11 Helical spring
11a, 11b Cylindrical portion
21 First terminal
21a Basement
31 Second terminal
32 Fixing member
33 Substrate
41 Support
51 Insulator
101, 111 Connector
200 Electrode
201 Cover
202 Cable
203 Opening

300 Electrometer
301 Arithmetic device
302 Monitor
400 Contact plane
500 Patient

What is claimed is:

1. A helical spring, comprising: cylindrical portions, with a constant outside coil diameter between successive coils, disposed at both ends of the helical spring in the axis direction; and a widened portion disposed between the cylindrical portions, wherein in the widened portion, from the both ends of the helical spring toward a center of the helical spring in the axis direction, a diameter of the helical spring increases as a pitch of the helical spring increases, wherein the helical spring is formed from a conducting material.

2. The helical spring according to claim **1**, where the helical spring has a spring constant at 2.0 gf/mm or smaller until being compressed to 50% or more in an axis direction.

3. A connector comprising: the helical spring according to claim **1** with a conductive property; and a first terminal and a second terminal to respectively fit in the cylindrical portions at the both ends of the helical spring, wherein the helical spring transmits an electrical signal between the first terminal and the second terminal.

4. The connector according to claim **3**, further comprising a support connected to the first terminal and stretching in the axis direction of the helical spring.

5. The connector according to claim **4**, wherein the second terminal is in the cylindrical shape and having the support inserted therein.

6. The connector according to claim **4**, wherein the support is insulated from the first terminal.

7. An electrode comprising:
 a plurality of connectors each according to claim **3**; and
 a substrate having the first terminal or the second terminal of each of the connectors fixed thereto.

8. The electrode according to claim **7** having a plurality of substrates.

9. An electrometer comprising:
 the electrode according to claim **7**;
 an arithmetic device for performing arithmetic processing to a signal received by the first terminal of the connector of the electrode and calculating a distribution of potentials on a contact plane of the first terminal; and
 a monitor for displaying the distribution of the potentials calculated by the arithmetic device.

10. An electrometer comprising: an electrode; an arithmetic device; and a monitor, wherein the electrode includes the helical spring according to claim **1**.

11. The connector according to claim **3**, wherein:
 the widened portion has a barrel shape, and
 the cylindrical portions are provided at portions having a minimum diameter of the helical spring and have an inside diameter the same as an outside diameter of the second terminal.

12. The connector according to claim **4**, wherein the support and the first terminal or second terminal are slidable.

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